

OPINION-EDITORIAL

HAWAI'I DRUG CONTROL STRATEGY FOCUSES ON LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS

**By
Lt. Governor James R. "Duke" Aiona, Jr.**

February 23, 2004

The Lingle-Aiona Administration is pleased that the 2004 State Legislature has made the issue of crystal methamphetamine, also known as "ice," one of its priorities. From the inception of our administration, the Governor and I have remained committed to addressing the problem of illicit drug and alcohol abuse and addiction. We will continue working collaboratively with the Legislature to find answers.

It is important to note that the January 2004 Joint House-Senate Task Force on Ice and Drug Abatement report concurs with several key components of our Hawai'i Drug Control Strategy, which was released in November 2003.

Participants in both the drug summit and the task force hearings agree that substance abuse is a public health issue and that partnerships are necessities. They unequivocally call for better coordination among service providers, governmental departments and community organizations in providing prevention, intervention and treatment programs. They also agree that there is a lack of data about substance abuse and that it is difficult to assess gaps in service and determine whether funding was well spent.

The legislature's solution proposes an additional \$21.6 million in the 2005 budget for treatment and related initiatives. Our Administration called this appropriation into question, however, due to the lack of "current, credible data" about how best to confront the substance abuse problem.

Keep in mind that already included in the FY 2005 budgets of the executive agencies is \$23.09 million in federal and state funding for prevention and intervention programs. Of that total, \$16.275 million is for treatment in the following departments: Health (\$12.92 million), Public Safety (\$2.575 million), Attorney General (\$446, 000) and Human Services (\$334,000).

Funding for prevention services already totals \$6.8 million. This consists of \$5.2 million from the Department of Health, \$1 million from the Governor's Office and \$570,000 from the Office of Youth Services.

In addition, the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration announced at the drug summit that the state's Department of Health would receive a five-year, \$3.5 million award for treating combined substance abuse and mental health disorders.

In January 2004, a Drug Control Liaison position was established in the Department of Human Services and assigned to my office to coordinate and implement the Hawai'i Drug Control Strategy.

Also in January 2004, the DHS, in collaboration with my office, issued a Request for Proposal in the amount of \$2.5 million for programs to strengthen families and address teen pregnancy at existing youth service centers.

In collaboration with the Hawai'i National Guard, the About Face program was initiated in January 2004 on Kaua'i. This work development program for at-risk youth between the ages of 14 and 21 will expand to all counties in the near future.

Moreover, after-school activities for middle school students will soon be implemented statewide. My office is also partnering with the Department of Education and the Department of Health to develop and implement comprehensive substance abuse education in the schools.

To enhance the efforts of law enforcement and the criminal justice system to ensure safer communities, the Administration has proposed the following legislative changes:

- Strengthen Hawai'i's electronic surveillance law by making it consistent with the federal electronic surveillance law.
- Enhance interdiction measures that stop drugs from entering our state by allowing law enforcement to engage in "walk and talk" activities, particularly at airports.
- Enact tougher mandatory and minimum sentencing laws to keep repeat offenders and drug traffickers off the streets and out of our communities.
- Increase penalties for individuals who manufacture drugs, particularly when a child is present.
- Limit the sale of chemicals used to manufacture drugs, and make it illegal to sell drug paraphernalia.
- Make permanent the law allowing seizure of cars and other property belonging to convicted drug felons. If we don't take action, this law will cease to exist on June 30, 2004.

Our Administration agrees that issues surrounding drug and alcohol abuse and addiction are highly complex, and that there is no "silver bullet" that will correct the problem. This must be kept in mind when seeking solutions.

Accordingly, our Hawai'i Drug Control Strategy serves as the blueprint for a coordinated, comprehensive approach balancing prevention, enforcement and treatment. And based on the totality of activity detailed above, it is obvious that the Administration is acting forcefully on the substance abuse problem right now.

In order to bring about meaningful change – as opposed to one-time, band-aid fixes – our Administration is striving to incorporate long- and short-term strategies that are flexible and sustainable. We believe this approach will ensure the health and safety of all the residents of Hawai'i for generations to come, and we welcome your support in this endeavor.